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Mathieson, Alexander

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A SERMON

PREACHED ON

ST. ANDREW'S DAY, 1868,

IN THE ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH,

BEFORE THE

St. Andrew's Society

OF MONTREAL,

BY THE

REV. ALEXANDER MATHIESON, D.D.,

One of the Chaplains of the Society.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

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PRINTED AT THE OFFICE OF JOHN C. BECKET, 78 GREAT ST. JAMES STREET.

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SERMON.

"Walk about Zion, and go round about her; tell the towers thereof. Mark well her bulwarks, consider her palaces, that ye may tell it to the generations following. For this God is our God for ever and ever." Psalm, XLVII, v. 12, 13, 14.

Scotchmen and sons of Scotchmen,—Members of St. Andrew's Society.

By the kind providence of God we are once more permitted to assemble in the house of prayer, to think of the loving kindness of God in the midst of his holy temple; to present at the throne of grace our humble expressions of gratitude, for the many mercies we have received; to acknowledge, with devout reverence, that gracious Being to be our God and the giver of all our blessings—civil and sacred—who was known and acknowledged by our fathers to be their God and Guide unto death.

When last I had the privilege of addressing you on our anniversary day—accommodating the language of the text to our national peculiarities—we proposed to survey the towers, the bulwarks, and palaces of our Fatherland; or, in other words, to consider the intellectual might; the moral habits and religious sentiments of the Scottish people. If, in illustration, we lingered on these topics with something of national pride—surely pardonable on such a day as this—our object in doing so, was not to inflate your minds with vanity, but to inspire you with the noble ambition, to reflect on your personal conduct and character the virtues that constitute the glory of Scotland, so that "ye may tell it to the generations following;" that individually you may present to posterity such a picture of true greatness, security and beauty, as will fire their spirits with the noble resolution of following in the steps of their illustrious forefathers.

To this part of our subject we shall now address ourselves,—and, here let me remark, that this duty divides itself into two great branches, both of which demand consideration:

First—That you may tell to posterity by what means these noble structures have been raised.

Second—How they have been, and still may be preserved.

The primary, and by far the most influential of the means employed in raising the spiritual defences of our Fatherland, was the BIBLE ; and a system of domestic and public instruction, founded on free access to the "word of God ;" or, in other words, the "Church in the House," and the "Church in the Land."

FIRST—THE CHURCH IN THE HOUSE.

Scotland—we repeat it—has long been distinguished among the nations of the earth. But for what has she been distinguished ? In what does her glory consist ? Chiefly in this—That she has publicly, distinctly, and decidedly acknowledged and honoured God, as the supreme Ruler of the Universe ; and through his written word sought his protection and guidance. The Bible is the spring of all her blessings—the charter of her people's rights—the foundation of her privileges—from it flows forth their social happiness—upon it rest their future hopes. Its truths, incorporated with their thoughts and feelings, fostered their moral energy, and guided their enterprise. No business of importance was undertaken without consulting the oracles of God. No journey was commenced until "over its sacred pages kneeling," the countenance and protection of Heaven were invoked. Its truths cheered their toils and hallowed their joys. Before the outspread Bible—as from a holy altar—ascended the morning and evening sacrifice of prayer and of praise. The Bible was the literature of Scotland. There was none of that ephemeral literature then, which now, pandering to vulgar and ignoble tastes—as it often does—exerts such a baleful influence on the mind. There was little literature of any sort, except a few standard works of practical theology : the sweet pastoral song that cheered the toils of her hardy sons ; and the fireside tales that banished tedium from the long winter nights. But God, and God's word, were the spring of all their thoughts and reflections. The Sabbath readings and Sabbath ministrations were the subjects of meditation for the whole week. The ploughman on the lea, and the shepherd on the hill, pondered the truths of God's word, and tested the doctrines founded on them, with profound and reverential awe. The mind, however narrowed and confined in respect to the world's frivolities, was expanded and enlarged in divine things. Hence the lofty piety, the deep reflection, the stern integrity and cautious thoughtfulness of the Scottish mind.

Hence, too, the warm and generous flow of the domestic sympathies.

Let us for a moment, "consider the days of old, the years of ancient times." Let us go back and try to catch a glimpse of the venerable forms of our fathers, as they appear through the receding vista of years, in that solemn grandeur, which invests beings of superior nature. I bid you look to the days of old; for, although much of that fine spirit of simple piety, which distinguished our ancestors, remains still in the land, much of it is gone with the disuse of the Bible; for, alas! the Bible is neglected by many, and its wisdom condemned by not a few. Let us try to catch a glimpse of their social habits, when "God's law was in their hearts," and was the law of their lives. Here, I doubt not, but many illustrative scenes and incidents will occur to your minds; but let us select one picture, delineated by Scotia's favourite bard, which, for its truthfulness must be recognized and acknowledged by you all. Every line, every touch, brings forcibly out some interesting feature of Scotch domestic life in its simple beauty. But I refer particularly to that part, where "the priest like father reads the sacred page."

"The cheerfu' supper done wi' serious face
They round the ingle form a circle wide;
The sire turns o'er with patriarchal grace
The big ha' Bible, once his father's pride;
His bonnet reverently is laid aside;
His lyart haffets wearing thin and bare;
Those strains that sweet in Zion once did glide,
He wales a portion wi' judicious care,
And "Let us worship God" he says wi' solemn air.

They chaunt their artless notes in simple guise
They tune their hearts, by far the noblest aim;
Perhaps "Dundee's" wild warbling measures rise,
Or plaintive "Martyrs" worthy of the name;
Or noble "Elgin" beats the heavenward flame—
The sweetest far of Scotia's holy lays,
Compared with these Italian trills are tame;
The tickl'd ear no heartfelt raptures raise;
Nae unison hae they with our Creator's praise.

The priest-like father reads the sacred page

* * * * *

Then kneeling down to Heaven's Eternal King
The saint, the father, and the husband prays.

* * * * *

Compared with this how poor Religion's pride
In all the pomp of method and of art.
When men display to Congregations wide
Devotion's every grace except the heart!
The Power incensed, the pageant will deserts,
But haply in some cottage far apart,
May hear well pleased the language of the soul,
And in the Book of Life the inmates poor enroll."

O! can we, without meltings of heart, recall these hallowed scenes, where the songs of Zion, sweet and clear, mingled with the soft whisperings of the evening's breeze? Can we, without the deepest emotions, summon before our imaginations the venerated and much loved forms of those we were wont to meet at the domestic altar, when fervent devotion hallowed every thing around? Can we think, without the highest moral benefit, and having a parent's lessons re-engraved on our hearts, of the Sabbath evenings, when the family circled round the "blazing inglen," each one in turn repeating what he remembered of the sermon preached that day, within "the House of God." When in alternate verse, they read a portion of "the Book of Life," and in rotation were examined from that excellent summary of faith and morals, the "Westminster Assembly's Shorter Catechism." An exercise, in which, perhaps, more than any other within the circle of parental duty, the father's affection, assuming the sterner aspect of magisterial discipline, betrayed his earnest solicitude for his child's progress in religious knowledge, and growth in grace. Can we bring to remembrance the time when father and mother, sister and brother, still an unscattered family, sent up from their peaceful dwelling place, the aspirations of praise to Father, Son and Holy-Ghost, without our lips being touched, "as with a live coal from off the Altar;" without being constrained to act as our fathers acted, and, in the reiteration of their holy example, to tell to posterity practically and persuasively, on what foundations the glory of our native country rests; to tell how her true defences have been raised, and how they may be preserved, so that, wherever her virtuous sons may in the course of providence, be placed, the same God, the same religious ordinances, the same civil privileges, the same social happiness and peace shall be the lot of their inheritance forever and ever.

The advantages that result from the "Church in the House," are not confined to the individual members of the household. No doubt, they most largely participate in the blessings it dispenses. Like the dews of heaven falling in peaceful silence on the tender herb, the exercises of domestic worship shed a heavenly influence on them collectively. Their affections catch a deeper, holier tone, from the exalted object of their worship. The most important truths are presented to their minds in the most impressive forms, and are associated with the loftiest feelings of the heart. A tenderer love binds them in

holy unity, binds the things on earth with the things in heaven, and imparts an earnest of that unspeakable happiness which flows from the brotherhood of saints in heaven.

Nor is this all. Experience demonstrates that family religion has not only a salutary influence on the formation of character, but is also one of the best safeguards of our privileges; one of the strongest barriers that can be erected against the encroachments of vice.

Often in the hour of temptation the recollection of early scenes in life has been the means of keeping the tried from sinning against God. Often, when lost to every feeling of shame, and deaf to every remonstrance, such recollections have awakened in the heart of the profligate youth feelings of compunction and sorrow, not the "sorrow that worketh death," but that which leads to life and peace. Often, when exposed to the withering influences of a selfish, wicked world, and far removed from a parent's watchful care, has the benefit of parental godliness been felt by the child with reviving influence. Even long after father and mother have been committed to the grave, their instructions, their prayers, their examples have been called to mind with a tenderness that has overpowered every other feeling, and sanctified every deed. Although dead, they continued to speak to the heart in the same accents of love that soothed the mind and charmed the earlier years of life. When the erring child has thought on the days when he kneeled down with his parents before the Throne of Grace, ere his heart was engrossed with the cares, and made callous by the vices of the world, and at the same time reflected on his views and actions; Oh, how unlike what they once were! ashamed of his conduct he has returned unto God, and joined himself unto the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.

SECOND—THE CHURCH IN THE LAND

has been an instrument no less effective in raising and preserving the intellectual, the moral and spiritual defences of our native land.

By the "Church in the Land," we mean the whole body of Believers who profess the true religion revealed in the word of God. No one can doubt that the body of men constituting the visible Church has a powerful moral influence on the world at large—more especially when the greater number of them are associated in Christian fellowship. In this respect we have much reason to thank God that

our nation has been peculiarly favoured. Although, all do not hold the same views on every point of ecclesiastical polity, yet there has been a general agreement on all the great questions of Christian "doctrine and discipline," that has been peculiarly favourable to the development of the Scottish religious character. With few exceptions, all are agreed on fundamental truths. Their differences have respect to minor points not essential to salvation; although in our opinion many of them are of vast importance to the social happiness of the people, and the advancement of the Redeemer's Kingdom in the world.

But while we regard the general harmony that prevails in Scotland in respect to the great doctrines of the Gospel, and mode of worship, as peculiarly favourable to the peace and prosperity of the community, we mean especially and particularly by the Church in the Land, those ecclesiastical institutions "established by law," because, "being founded on the word of God, and agreeable thereto," which, with a perfectly free spirit of toleration, have brought the truths of God's word to bear upon the sentiments and actions of the community in a most effective way, and done more than anything else as an instrument in God's hands, to cherish that noble and elevated spirit of piety, which has distinguished the nation—a piety, which, without such a stable fostering element would never have existed, and we fear, would not be long maintained.

Brethren! we make no vain boast when we affirm that the Fathers of the Reformation were energetic God-fearing men, and in God's hands were chosen instruments for working out the civil and religious liberties of the nation. There was nothing to which these great men devoted themselves, with such calm, persevering earnestness, as to secure to themselves and posterity the invaluable blessing of a church, intertwined with the very frame work of the civil constitution, and bound—solemnly and legally bound—to have the pure doctrines of God's word preached in simplicity and truth to the people—that benefits so precious as the stated dispensation of word and ordinances, of spiritual comfort and consolation, and the "godly upbringing of children"—benefits which concern the whole nation—should not depend on the capricious fluctuations of popular favour, or be repressed or corrupted by a dominant power, whether that power be wielded by the Monarch, or the mob-driven Demagogue. They determined that the Church in the Land should be the church of the nation; that while

it should be left free and unfettered in the exercise of its spiritual functions, it should be incorporated with the state in inseparable union. To attain this grand object, they were content to be spoiled of their earthly possessions; and even to peril life itself. They kept God's glory constantly in view, and He blessed them, and prospered their efforts. The fruits of their daring and deeds are abundantly evidenced in the land. In the many precious blessings, civil and sacred, dispensed through the National Church, it is made plainly to appear that God is in the midst of them—their God and King—and as he has blessed them in times past, so will he bless them still.

In reviewing the benefits that have been derived from the National Church, we should consider its operation and efficiency as an instrument for the moral and spiritual elevation of mankind, as developed in that admirably devised and faithfully executed agency, usually denominated the "parochial system," comprising—First: The legal recognition of the Sabbath, not only as a Divine, but as a National Institution, and, essentially connected with it, the public worship of God. Second: The Eldership, or the religious superintendence of the community, and the management and support of the poor; and Third:—The Parish Schools, blending religious and secular instruction in a way that is consistent with the great spirit of toleration, and the widest extension of a good general education. In illustration of these topics we must confine our remarks far within the limits that their vast importance demands.

Brethren—It is a benefit which we cannot sufficiently appreciate, that the Sabbath of the Lord is strictly guarded from profanation by positive statutes, and that "Christian people" can worship the Lord their God, according to their consciences, none daring to make them afraid. If the principles of religious liberty have not always been so well understood as they are now, and days of darkness have arisen out of an overstrained interpretation of the law, yet the law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good. If the Kingdom of Christ is not of this world, yet it is for this world, for man as a social as well as a sinful creature. Though it refuses to mingle with its material elements, and has no connection with its shifting politics and ignoble pursuits, yet its grand design is to humanise, and elevate man's condition and consecrate them to the glory of God.

While Christianity, as a regenerating element, claims admission into the Government of every State, and will battle its way, not "in garments rolled in blood," but with its silent purifying influences, until "the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of Christ;" at the same time we cannot sufficiently admire the wisdom displayed by the framers of our civil constitution, that along with the appointment of the Sabbath as a day of rest, they made due provision for having the truths of the gospel borne home to the hearts and consciences of every man. We cannot be too thankful for the blessed privilege of having the gospel faithfully and statedly preached to us. There is something in this appointment truly national—something divinely beneficent. Let us overlook for the present, the meaner considerations of a "Church and State" paction for mutual civil benefit. Let us look at it in the holier aspect of a grand scheme for the spiritual enlightenment and moral improvement of the nation. What scheme presents itself as more efficient for that purpose, than that a body of men, vigorously tested, by a high standard of religious, moral, and intellectual qualifications, should be set apart to preach the gospel to the high and the low; to the rich and the poor; without money and without price. That while they derived their commission from a higher source than the highest earthly authority, and united as one body by their common faith; their common sympathies and common objects of pursuit; yet, to give full effect to their labours of love, by the law of the land, each should have assigned to him a distinct field for his ministrations, and it should be his duty to go into each and all within the assigned limits, and say unto them, "I am sent with a free gospel unto you; I ask not your silver nor your gold, I only ask you freely to receive it. If you desire to partake of its ordinances according to the simple, scriptural forms prescribed by the Church, and are morally fit to receive them, I am commissioned to dispense them to you. I invite you, with all your brethren in the parish, who hold the same faith, to come, Sabbath after Sabbath, as one family in Christ, to the House of God, there to 'worship Him in the beauty of holiness; there to hear what great things Christ has done for you; there to offer up your prayers, and through the renewing influences of the Holy Spirit to be built up a spiritual temple unto God.' Moreover, I am sent to watch over your spiritual interests; to rebuke you for your sins; to counsel and encourage you

in the discharge of your duties, and, if you accept of my ministrations to aid you to the utmost of my power ; if you are in sorrow and distress, and need comfort, I am ready to minister to you the consolations of the Gospel of peace ; if laid on a bed of sickness or of death, and you long for Christian Communion, and in fellowship to present your prayers at the throne of grace in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, send for me, let it be by night or by day, I am bound if in health, to attend on you ; I am Christ's servant, and I am your servant for Christ's sake. He has sent me with his Gospel to preach it and apply its consolations as he has given me ability. I stand in his stead, and in his name I offer to your faith all its unspeakable blessings. I constrain not your conscience ; I dictate not your faith ; I speak unto you as wise men, judge ye what I say.' Christ has given me my commission. He has commanded me to discharge the functions of my office, 'whether you will hear or whether you will forbear.' In His kind providence, through the liberality of the State, I am raised above the influence of your flattery or your frowns.—Placed in a position where I am neither tempted to preach to you smooth things, nor by ecclesiastical anathemas to work upon your fears, my business is by the force of truth to build you in fellowship with Christ, and with each other. 'having the same love, being of one accord and one mind.'"

Nor are the silent influences of Sabbath convocations the least powerful, in the system of means employed to elevate the national character. Assembled to worship God, manifested in Christ Jesus ; as infinitely merciful, compassionate and good, by sympathy, the religious feelings of the congregations are awakened into intenser exercise, and their social affections enlarged. Profoundly impressed with the Majesty of that unseen Being, into whose dread presence they have come—they are filled with reverential awe,—every sinful passion is hushed. Every earthly feeling is laid aside, all selfishness is swallowed up in the intenser emotions of brotherly love. United by a common faith, they look on each other as children of the same Father, and heirs of the same heavenly inheritance. The ennobling effects of social worship are heightened in the Rural Parishes, especially where the inhabitants are of one religious persuasion, and their minds are not ruffled with the emulations and jealousies of sectarian strife. Assembling in the "Auld Kirk Yard," a few minutes before the hour of worship,—as they were often wont to do—to recall to

mind the incidents of loving intercourse, and the forms and faces of those who had more recently passed from among them into the shades of death; after holding momentary communion with the dead, they would turn to the living; and amidst the gowan decked, grassy hillocks, which modestly marked where the ashes of their kindred for many generations reposed; with kindly greeting—expressed with a solemnity and earnestness becoming the scene—they cemented the bonds that united them as Christians and friends, and joined them to every other member of the same spiritual family whether in earth or heaven.

Can we doubt the ennobling influences of such scenes and associations? Would it be wise or prudent, rudely to disturb with schismatic strife, a unity cherished by such sympathies and hallowed by such holy associations? Would it be Christian, “doting about questions and strife of words, whereof cometh perverse disputings,” to set in hostile array those, whom God sent his Son into the world to bind in love—especially if his own blessed word be left free and unfettered to exert its sanctifying power on the consciences and conduct of men? Christianity is a religion of love and concord. Its practical bearings tend to bring all the families of the earth into one, in Christ. This is the special work of the Church. Let it be ours to hasten forward this glorious consummation, by edifying one another in love, and establishing in our social intercourse, the pure moralities of Christianity, on which the peace and prosperity of the nation rests.

A second element in the Parochial system, that has a great moral influence on the community, is the Eldership. We will not now advert to those functions of the office, that are purely ecclesiastical, but confine our remarks to that department which relates to the inspection of the morals of the Parishioners, and the ministrations of the Church to the temporal wants of the poor.

An agency more scriptural, more in harmony with the Catholic spirit of Christianity, could not be instituted than a well appointed Eldership. Selected from every rank and condition of society, the distinctions of life laid aside,—and the highest nobles in the land proud to take their stations by the side of the poorest peasants, to discharge in common brotherhood duties which have in view the glory of God, and the spiritual welfare of His people, it has a direct

tendency to bind the members of each individual Church in one body, and make them feel that Catholicity which their principles impart to every other Church throughout the world that loves the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth.

An order of men so composed—men of irreproachable morals—the rougher edges of their peculiar habits of thinking and acting rubbed down and smoothed by their frequent conferences, and the free expression of their respective views—and, who, in virtue of their sacred office, are invested with authority to supervise the morals of the Parish, and minister to the wants of the poor, cannot fail to have a powerful influence in restraining the vices and promoting the peace and happiness of the people. They, in fact, form an effective body of "Moral Police," and, keeping a constant "watch for their souls," they gain an insight into the character and behaviour of each individual, that enables them to administer censure without bitterness, and commendation without fostering conceit.

An institution of this sort, were it a mere voluntary association, unsanctioned by law, and whose censorial powers, depended wholly on tolerance, would be an impracticable absurdity. But as office-bearers in the house of God, sustained in the exercise of authority, by the laws of the land, their prerogatives, prudently, temperately and faithfully exercised, are attended with an amount of good that is incalculable.

But it is in the civic economy of the rural churches that the utility of the Eldership is the best tested, and, generally speaking, has been found to be most efficient in cultivating the social virtues and fostering that noble spirit of independence, which distinguishes all classes, and makes even the poorest spurn the boon of charity, so long as Providence gives health and strength to win by patient industry and toil, an honest livelihood for themselves; or, if poverty should come with old age and sickness, makes them feel that it is not the alms of charity they receive, but the "promised bread and sure water" provided by the Great Father of all, sent to them by the hands of his own servants.

When we look to the condition of the poor in other kingdoms, where they are left to starve and die, or gathered into communities and fostered into idleness by an aimless charity,—or where a complicated and expensive machinery squanders, with indiscriminate and

often wasteful prodigality, large revenues extorted from the pockets of grumbling owners of the soil, and bestowed on idle stout-bodied paupers. A system that has inscribed on its front in clear legible characters:—

To stifle the generous sympathies and benevolent feelings of the rich :

To extinguish the grateful sentiments of the poor ;

To discourage industry and enterprise ;

To cherish indolence and vice ;

This receptacle for idleness was erected.

When from such spectacles we turn our eyes to the gratuitous labour of the Ministers and Elders of the parishes of Scotland, backed by the generous exertions of the landowners, and consider the minute inquiries into the real wants and condition of the poor, and the judicious application of relief, according to the necessities of each individual's case, we see in operation a scheme at once Scriptural, economical and efficient. We see a moral power at work, sanctioned by Divine authority, and animated by the warm charities of the Gospel, cherishing the best feelings of the heart, both among the rich and the poor, making the one compassionate, generous and kind, the other nobly independent, respectful and thankful. When we think on these things and contrast the condition and independent spirit of the poor of our own country with the saucy insolence, or crying importunity of the beggars of other lands, we may well be proud of our Church economies, and fervently pray that it may please the Great Disposer of events to avert from our native land, the blighting influences of a secular poor law.

Unhappily we must look back to the days that are gone for the true type of Parochial economies, for from the rapid increase and fluctuating nature of the population, and frequent stagnation of trade, the poor law of necessity has of late been modified, and it is to be feared not without the usual deteriorating effects on the dispositions of the poor, and the social relations of the community. It is long, however, before a national characteristic can be changed, and it is gratifying to the office bearers of your Society to find that, while a few would sorn on their bounty, there are many who with difficulty can be prevailed upon to receive their kindly aid.

The Parish School is another institution that has been singularly blessed in elevating the characters of Scotchmen, and fitting them to fill with honour and success, offices of the highest trust, and importance in every part of the world.

Brethren I have detained you long, too long, not to have imposed on your patience, but I make no apology for detaining you a little longer, for I hold you by an irresistible charm, have you spell-bound by the very utterance of the words "Parish Schools of Scotland." I speak now to your sense of gratitude and virtuous pride, as well as of tender remembrances. The mere enunciation of the name is replete with beautiful scenes, with stirring incidents and impassioned feelings. It brings us back to the days of "Auld Lang Syne," to that most joyous period of our lives—our School boy days when we luxuriated in pleasures which we can ne'er enjoy again, and met with friends we may ne'er see again. It carries us back farther still,—to days when our fathers struggled for the liberty which Scotchmen enjoy, and know how to appreciate—when the fathers of our Church struggled, and struggled perseveringly, to wrench from the hands of rapacious spoilers a portion of the Church's patrimony! For what purpose? To feed and clothe their own wasted and worn bodies; for their generous and patriotic aims had reduced them to the utmost indigence? No Brethren! but to bequeath to posterity the Parish schools! to give a sound, wholesome education to the children of the poorest in the land at an easy price. These generous and patriotic spirits, cared for "the godly upbringing of children" before they cared for their own secular wants. These schools are not mere appendages to the Church. They are an essential part and portion of the ecclesiastical establishment of the land. Originating in the forethought of the Church—they have been endowed chiefly from her patrimony—have been watched over by her office-bearers with paternal affection, and are still under her supervision and guardian care. Yes, Brethren! The Parish Schools of Scotland are associated with a crowd of the tenderest and most endearing associations, with our earliest and happiest days, our homes and our parents, the scenes, the friends, and joys of youth, and with the most interesting period of our nation's history. But they are not only associated with the past—they are identified with all that is great and good in the present condition of Scotchmen. To these seminaries they owe directly

many of the noble and higher qualities that distinguish them,—and indirectly the whole tone of their character. Their religious sentiment, their hearty loyalty, their general information and intelligence, their industry and genius, their real hearts, and generous hands, are all more or less connected with the early training of the Parish School.

I am happy to say that this noble Institution has hitherto resisted the current of innovation, which has set in so strongly in modern times—that wild and reckless spirit of change, that would overturn all old things, simply because they are old—that envious spirit of sectarianism, that would remove every thing that stands in the way of its selfish aims. There has existed in every age, a class of restless agitators, who, in their own estimation, are wiser than their Fathers, and see nothing right, but the creations of their own brain, or what tends to advance their own schemes. That class is numerous at present, and on pretence of setting the Parish schools on a broader and more liberal foundation, they would wrest them from the inspection and superintendence of the Church. Either the good sense, or grateful feelings of the people, generally, have prevented the sacrilegious innovations of these would be reformers, and fortunately, they can find no fault of sufficient magnitude, to give even the colour of an excuse for revolutionary movement. For while the experience of nearly three hundred years has tested the value of these schools, without fear of contradiction, we affirm they are in a state of as great, if not greater efficiency, than they have ever been. We do not mean, that throughout the length and breadth of the land, they are raised to as high a degree of proficiency, as they can be carried. Great improvements have recently been made, not only in the mode of communicating elementary knowledge, but in vast additions to the stock of knowledge to be communicated. In these improvements the Scottish educational system has shared. They may not have yet reached the more remote Parishes, yet gradually, and at a proper time they will win their way, till the most distant fibre shall feel the inspiring influence. It is the business of general education to keep pace with the march of improvement, not to precede it. It would serve little purpose to initiate the distant Highlander in his misty glens and among his cloud capped mountains, in the abstruse sciences. He has got—through the Parish School—knowledge which he prizes far above that—the knowledge of the Son

of God "whom to know is eternal life." The rest will come when he is ripe for it. Wherever there is genius it will burst forth like the sun-beam and meet with due encouragement in the Parish School.

While some of them may do no more than impart the simplest elements of a good education, there are others that, in point of efficiency, as well as the variety of the branches taught, are not inferior to the highest Educational Institutes of other lands; while all of them give that education that is fitted to prepare Scotchmen for filling every office—for what office do they not fill—with credit to themselves and honour to their country. From straw thatched cottages, statesmen, historians, poets, philosophers, painters and warriors have gone forth, who have had their habits of thought and action formed within these schools, to dazzle the world with their genius, and command admiration by their nicely balanced intellect. A distinguishing characteristic of these Schools is the happily blended and balanced elements of education. The religious, the moral, the intellectual faculties are all duly developed, none of them cultivated at the expense of the others. From other schools, more profound scholars may have gone forth, but nowhere has the mass of population gone forth, with that amount of information, and that sagacity, to work up, by self tuition, that information for the real practical business of life. These schools are peculiarly the schools of the people. Within the reach of all, meeting general wants, yet adapted to individual requirements, they belong to all classes and conditions of society. Men, we repeat it, have been trained in these schools, who have taken their stations in the highest ranks of literature and science; but had the masses gone forth polished and bedizened, with the glaring acquisitions of "polite literature," they would have been unfitted for the business of common life. They might have been profound philosophers, or accomplished scholars, but they would not have been, what in my opinion, is far better—Scotchmen*; well informed, shrewd, self-reliant men, prepared to

* In the course of readings, I met with an anecdote, but where, my memory fails me at present to point out, or name the persons to whom it relates; it was to this effect: A Minister of State, said to one, to whom he owed a political obligation, "What can I do for you?" The other replied, "Nothing." "What! Nothing?" "No. You cannot make me a Scotchman! These men fill every office of emolument and trust, with credit to themselves and benefit to others; but, the best of it is, they are dependent on no one, they are indebted to themselves alone." This, as I look upon it, is a compliment indirectly paid to the self-reliant training of the Parish School, and that indomitable perseverance, characteristic of Scotchmen, which makes everything bend to the higher aims of a rightly directed mind.

enter on any one of the numerous paths of life, to which the individual taste or genius might lead. Imperfections belong to these schools we admit—for what institution depending on human agency is perfect? But their greatest imperfection is this: the teachers are inadequately remunerated for their laborious and important services. Thus enterprise is discouraged by sordid economy, and mental progress retarded by despicable niggardliness. But, with all their faults, these schools, both in their principles and practical results, are so admirably adapted to the genius and temper of the people, and the ordinary occurrences of life, that if the advantages they afford are made a good use of, the great end of public education will be accomplished, men made great, good, virtuous and happy.

That the nation's greatness is chiefly to be ascribed to her religious institutions, few will dispute, whose judgment is of any value. These are her principal bulwarks still; or, in other words, that spirit of civil and religious liberty, that profound piety, and that moral excellence which their institutions inspire and cherish is at once the glory and defence of the nation. True to the principles which the Church affectionately inculcates, she may frown defiance on her foes. No attempt to enslave her, physically or mentally, can succeed so long as her venerable and sacred institutions remain intact, and these principles are faithfully wrought out, for "God is known in her palaces for a refuge."

By practically exhibiting the intimate relations that exist between the ecclesiastical, the educational and domestic economies of our native country, and their influences on the formation of the national character, we "tell to the generation following":—

"—howe'er crowns and coronets be rent,
A virtuous populace may rise the while,
And stand a wall of fire around our much lov'd Isle."

But more than this is implied in the text. We are to "tell to the generations following," not only how our national defences have been raised, but also how they may be preserved.

The means, in divine Providence, that have been employed in their erection are the means to be used in their preservation. The Church in the House; The Church in the Land: including the Educational elements are truly and essentially divine institutions, and so far as they are spiritual, are endued with immortality. Their

external forms being merely accessories—to adapt them to the fluctuating condition of society—may grow old, fall into decay, and be swept from the face of the earth. But they are so intimately blended with divine truth, which can never die, that out of their dissolutions will spring up new forms of life and beauty. They possess a self-renewing power, which will preserve their essential qualities amidst all the changes that are passing around them. Oppression, injustice, spoliation, may jar the machinery and even put a temporary stop to its action, but “the word of the Lord endureth for ever,” and the renewing power of that word, we are assured, shall not cease so long as the sun and the moon shall endure.

But with these causes for trust, we have much to alarm us for the security and stability of the ecclesiastical establishment of the Kingdom. The unprincipled struggles for political place and power now going forward, threaten their overthrow. The childish apeings of the heartless worship of an unscriptural faith, eating the very vitals of true Godliness, warn us that we are on the eve of troublous times, and that in divine providence a storm is preparing to burst forth, for the purification of the church, and removal from it of the indifference, the cant, and pretensions that have so long deformed it, and impaired its usefulness. That the inestimable blessings which we have so long enjoyed may be transmitted unimpaired and uncorrupted to posterity, we must look to God, and depending on his blessing in the faithful application of the means of grace, we must earnestly seek to have the institutions of the Dominion thoroughly incorporated with the principles of a living practical Christianity. Alas! alas! when recently a traitorous Legislature, publicly divorced religion from the institutions of the land, political demagogues and envious sectaries shouted for joy, that the constitution of Church and State was utterly demolished; a shout re-echoed from the recreant throats of a few renegade Scotchmen, who, let us hope, “neither understood what they said, nor whereof they affirmed.” A more melancholy spectacle of political turpitude than a Government which does not publicly and specially acknowledge the sovereign power and authority of Jehovah, is not to be found among the tribes of men; nor is there a condition of society more deplorable than that left without any fixed standard of religious truth to battle its way, through surrounding mazes of ignorance and error, to a settled reliance on law or custom. What

have been the results of such a state? Men drunk with their brothers blood, contending for mastery, and consecrating their crimes with the name of patriotism! What would be the social progress that would have to struggle on its path, through the wild excesses of a levelling democracy, unrestrained by the laws either of God or man? Anarchy, confusion, and every evil work. But "the Lord reigneth. Let the people rejoice, and the multitude of the isles be glad thereof." This fundamental truth, engraved on the heart by the finger of God—though almost obliterated—still faintly utters its voice, calling us to activity in the work of the Lord. The revelations of a surer record point out the path, and command us to pursue it. The sentiments infused and cherished by the piety of our forefathers inspire our patriotism and urge us to bestow on the land of our adoption, the moral and religious qualities that have adorned and blessed the land of our birth.

We have this day invited you to walk about Zion, to tell her towers, to mark well her bulwarks and consider her palaces, that ye may tell it to the generation following. Tell to the people of this new Dominion that the God of your fathers is your God. Tell in your conduct and character what great things the Lord hath done for you. By implicit confidence in the power and wisdom of Jehovah, tell,—
 "God is your guide even unto death." Let your moral and religious feelings, your steady, honourable, and ever advancing course to excellence, tell, in whatever land you are, you are Scotchmen. Let profound reverence for God's word and God's worship tell, to all nations, "this God is your God for ever and ever." Let the sacred institutions to which, with the divine blessing, you owe so much, be transmitted unpolluted and unimpaired to posterity, to tell what you have seen and what you have heard in the "City of the Lord of Hosts, in the city of our God." When you cease to familiarise your minds with the truths of God's voice, and refuse to obey His laws, you renounce your allegiance to the King of Kings. When you profane His Sabbath and neglect His worship, you betray your country's honour and stain her glory. You may marshal yourselves under whatever banners you choose to follow—no one will recognise in you, the descendants of those leal and true hearted men, who in days of old unfurled their proud standards to the free winds of heaven, and under their shadow achieved your liberties, and secured your national privileges. What! are there any here who have left

the shores of their Fatherland, and forgotten its heath-covered mountains, its sweet shady glens, and daisy-decked valleys? Are there any here who have forgotten their parental Home, their Parish Church and Parish School; and freed from the restraints which a parent's inspection, or a nation's sober piety imposed on the wayward impulses of youth, have renounced the distinguishing characteristics of their native land, and virtually abjured the name of Scotchmen? Before you seal the record of your base defection, return with me in imagination but for a moment to the scenes of your youth. Mingle once more in that happy group of playmates, where lasting friendships were formed, and a desire for general knowledge was stimulated, sometimes under a stern, but always under an affectionate discipline. Or, on the Sabbath morn, listen to that "Church-going bell," and with the stillness and serenity that reigns over the peaceful landscape, enter that lowly Temple—give ear to the voice of "the man of God," telling to earnest worshippers what Jesus did and suffered to bring life and peace to men, and beseeching them, "to live to the praise of the glory of his grace"; listen to the simple melody that in sweet and artless notes, but from hearts attuned, arises in praise of Father, Son and Holy Ghost. And now, leaving the House of God, enter into the home of your childhood, and listen to that gentle, low voice of a mother's love that nightly taught you to repeat—"Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven." Or to those deep-toned utterances of the Father's heart, that commit you to God's holy keeping, through all your earthly pilgrimage, and then—if you retain the honest feelings of a man—refuse, if you can, practically, to tell to posterity; to tell nightly to your children, to tell weekly to the world, how the intellectual character of your country has been formed; how her moral and religious defences were reared; how they have been preserved, and may still be maintained as the strongest of the nation's bulwarks from generation to generation.

Dear to my spirit, Scotland, hast thou been
 Since infant years, in all thy glens of green!
 Land of my love, where every sound and sight
 Comes in soft melody, or melts in light;
 Land of the green wood by the silver rill,
 The heather and the daisy of the hill,
 The guardian thistle to the foeman stern,
 The wild rose, hawthorn, and the lady fern,
 Land of the lark, that like a seraph sings,

Beyond the rainbow upon quivering wings ;
 Land of wild beauty, and romantic shapes,
 Of sheltered valleys, and of stormy capes,
 Of the bright garden and the tangled brake,
 Of the dark mountain, and the sun-lit lake.
 Land of my birth and of my father's grave,
 The eagle's home, the eyrie of the brave,
 The foot of slave thy heather never stained,
 Nor rocks, that battlement thy sons profaned !
 Unrivalled land of science and of arts ;
 Land of fair faces and of faithful hearts ;
 Land where religion paves her heavenward road,
 Land of the temple of the Living God !
 Yet dear to feeling, Scotland, as thou art,
 Should'st thou that glorious temple e'er desert,
 I would disclaim thee—seek the distant shore,
 Of some fair isle—and then return no more.

The sermon was listened to with the most profound attention. A collection was taken up for the benefit of the poor, when the congregation sang the 2nd paraphrase. Before the dismissal the choir sang, "How beautiful upon the Mountains." During the service the flags of the various societies were hung up in different parts of the Church. At the close, the procession formed in the same order as it had proceeded to Church, and after marching through some of the principal streets of the city, arrived at the Mechanics' Hall. Here the St. Andrew's Society again held a session, at which a vote of thanks was passed to Rev. Dr. Mathieson for his excellent sermon, coupled with a request that it might be published.



*From the estate of John
 and Olga Cutman.*

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